

## Message Text

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42

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 /055 W

----- 111627

O R 251810Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6871

INFO AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

UNCLAS LISBON 2663

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: ELECTIONS: PORTUGUESE GO TO THE POLLS

SUMMARY: THE PORTUGUESE WENT TO THE POLLS APRIL 25 TO  
ELECT 263 DELEGATES TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC. VOTER  
TURNOUT WAS LARGE, BUT BELOW THE RECORD 92 PLUS PERCENT OF  
A YEAR AGO. ONLY MINOR INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED.  
END SUMMARY.

1. ATMOSPHERE OF CALM: UNDER SUNNY SKYS AND NEAR PERFECT  
WEATHER, PORTUGUESE CITIZENS CAST THEIR BALLOTS ON APRIL 25  
TO SELECT 263 DELEGATES TO THE COUNTRY'S FIRST DEMOCRATICALLY-  
ELECTED PARLIAMENT IN ALMOST 50 YEARS. VOTING TOOK PLACE  
IN A CALM, ALMOST FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE, ALTHOUGH ARMED POLICE  
AND MILITARY PATROLS WERE OBSERVED IN LISBON AND POTENTIAL  
TROUBLE SPOTS IN THE SETUBAL AREA. ONLY MINOR INCIDENTS  
WERE REPORTED BY THE TIME THE POLLS CLOSED AT 7:00 P.M.

2. TURNOUT DOWN: WHILE EVEN THE MOST FRAGMENTARY RETURNS  
WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR SEVERAL HOURS AT THE EARLIEST,  
REPORTS FROM OUR CONSULS IN OPORTO AND PONTA DELGADA  
AND EMBASSY OBSERVERS AT MORE THAN A DOZEN POLLING PLACES  
THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY INDICATE THAT THE TURNOUT WILL BE DOWN  
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SOMEWHAT FROM LAST YEAR'S RECORD HIGH 92 PLUS PERCENT.

ESTIMATES ARE MADE DIFFICULT BY THE SHIFT IN VOTING PATTERN BETWEEN THIS YEAR AND LAST. IN 1975 THE BULK OF THE BALLOTING TOOK PLACE DURING THE MORNING HOURS, AS VOTERS, UNSURE OF WHAT TO EXPECT, ARRIVED EARLY AND FORMED LONG LINES OUTSIDE THE POLLING PLACES. BY EARLY AFTERNOON, HOWEVER, LINES HAD DISAPPEARED AND THE FLOW OF VOTERS HAD SLOWED TO A TRICKLE IN MOST LOCATIONS. THIS YEAR THERE HAS BEEN A SLOWER BUT STEADIER STREAM OF VOTERS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DAY.

3. EARLY ESTIMATES: SEVERAL NORTHERN POLLING SITES FROM WHICH EARLY FIGURES WERE AVAILABLE, REPORTED ABOUT 45 PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS HAD CAST THEIR BALLOTS BY 1:00 PM; 60 PERCENT HAD VOTED BY 3:00 PM. THESE PERCENTAGES WERE SLIGHTLY DOWN FROM THE PACE OF A YEAR AGO. GOP OFFICIALS AT THE GULBENKIAN ELECTION CENTER ESTIMATED FOR THE AMBASSADOR AND SENATOR PERCY THAT THE TURNOUT WOULD BE IN THE AREA OF 80 PERCENT. BUT ELECTION OFFICIALS STRESSED THE HIGHLY TENTATIVE NATURE OF THIS ESTIMATE.

4. IMPROVED PROCEDURES: IMPROVED ORGANIZATION WAS ANOTHER FACTOR MAKING FOR SHORTER LINES AT MOST POLLING PLACES. THERE WERE MORE POLLING SITES AND THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AT EACH LOCATION WAS ALSO BETTER. THE OLD AND INFIRM WERE HURRIED THROUGH, AS WERE UNIFORMED MILITARY PERSONNEL. WARDENS WERE PRESENT TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AND GUIDE VOTERS THROUGH THE PROCESS. FIRST AID STATIONS AND NURSERIES WERE SET UP AT PRIMARY POLLING PLACES. THE VOTERS THEMSELVES, MOST IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST, CAME IN A STEADY STREAM VIA ALL MODES OF TRANSPORTATION, INCLUDING OX CARTS, OPEN TRUCKS, AND FLATBED TRAILERS PULLED BY TRACTORS IN SOME RURAL AREAS. ALL IN ALL, A VERY IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF DEMOCRACY.  
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**TAGS:** PINT, PO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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